

Amendments to the Claims

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of detecting and using hanging wire pixels in a digital image, having pixels comprising:
 - (a) automatically identifying pixels from the digital color image representing one or more sky regions;
 - (b) automatically detecting pixels representing hanging wire regions in the sky regions; and
 - (c) using the detected hanging wire pixels to determine the orientation of the digital image or to replace such hanging wire pixels.
2. (Currently Amended) A method of improving a digital color image having pixels, the method comprising:
 - (a) automatically identifying pixels from the digital color image representing one or more sky regions;
 - (b) automatically detecting sky occlusion regions by examining the sky regions;
 - (c) developing a model based on the identified sky pixels, wherein such model is a mathematical function that has inputs of pixel position and outputs of color; and
 - (d) using the model to operate on the digital color image to replace the values of pixels from the sky occlusion regions with values predicted by the model.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the model is a two-dimensional polynomial of the pixel position in the digital color image.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the polynomial is a second-order polynomial.
5. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the step of identifying an initial sky region further comprises:
 - (i) identifying pixels from the digital color image representing an initial sky region;

- (ii) developing a model based on the identified sky pixels, wherein such model is a mathematical function that has inputs of pixel position and outputs of color; and
- (iii) and using the model to operate on the digital color image to classify additional pixels not included in the initial sky region as sky.

6. (Original) The method of claim 2 further including determining when sky occlusion regions are formed by hanging wires and determining the orientation of the image based on the detected hanging wire regions.

7. (Currently amended) A method of determining the orientation of a digital color image having pixels, the method comprising:

- (a) automatically identifying pixels from the digital color image representing one or more sky regions;
- (b) automatically detecting one or more hanging wire regions by examining the sky regions; and
- (c) analyzing the hanging wire regions to determine the orientation of the digital color image.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein analyzing the hanging wire regions further comprises:

determining the direction of gravity by examining the location of pixels of the hanging wire region with respect to the endpoints of the hanging wire region.

9. (Currently amended) A method of removing hanging wire region pixels from detected sky regions in a digital color image having pixels, the method comprising:

- (a) automatically identifying pixels from the digital color image representing one or more sky regions;
- (b) automatically detecting hanging wire regions by examining the sky regions;
- (c) developing a model based on the identified sky pixels, wherein such model is a mathematical function that has inputs of pixel position and outputs of color; and

(d) using the model to operate on the digital color image to replace the values of digital color image pixels associated with the hanging wire regions with values predicted by the model to thereby remove the hanging wire region pixels.